

# Reminiscences of a Wayfarer

Some of the Important Events of the Pioneer Days of Richardson County and Southeast Nebraska, as remembered by the writer, who has spent fifty-one years here.

## SOME OF THE OLD TIMERS.

As remarked in a previous paper, the three last years of the decade of 1850, were marked by rapid increase of the population of Nebraska. The acute stage of the troubles in Kansas had been reached and passed before the end of the Pierce administration, for the very good reason that emigration from the free states was largely in excess of that from the slave states. From the date of the organization of the territorial government till mid-summer 1856, Kansas was the storm center in the Union, and the breeding ground of those baleful sentiments which at a late date brought about an internecine war that shook this nation as no other nation has ever been shaken and lived.

With comparative quiet restored, the rush of people to that territory was, in a great measure, suspended, and the channel of emigration turned in the direction of Nebraska. The country was to a large extent a terra incognita to the people of the east and being further to the north than any other organized possession of the nation, it was thought by the people south to be wholly unfit as a district in which slave labor could be utilized with profit, and so in large measure was neglected by both sections, and as a consequence no effort whatever was made in the way of planting the institution of slavery in it, and no excitement obtained on that account, therefore, emigration was slow in coming in till the period I have mentioned.

In our section, the increase from the now middle western states in the Mississippi valley north of the Ohio, from the spring of 1859 till the commencement of the war in 1861, was rapid and in all respects highly satisfactory. The valley of the Muddy and its affluents was filled up to the north county line, and the same was true of every water-course in the country.

A colony of excellent people came on from northern Illinois, headed by the elder Freeman A. Tisdell, and located at Salem. There were several families of them, besides single young men, and were followed from time to time, by others from the same section, among whom I remember Capt. Anson Risin, long a citizen of Salem and later a resident of Falls City, and Lincoln, where he died only a year or so ago at the great age of nearly ninety.

Our fellow citizen, W. W. Abbey, was another to follow the Tisdell emigration a few years later, and some others whose names I do not recall at this moment.

The Tisdell family were somewhat distinctive, all of them natural politicians, and quite successful in obtaining office.

The younger Freeman A. Tisdell, was elected a member of the territorial legislature the year after he landed at Salem and his father given the office of county treasurer the year following, which he held four years.

Another son, Delos A. Tisdell was afterwards elected to the legislature once or twice—once in '68, I distinctly remember, and it is in my mind that he was elected once before, but of that I am not certain. Paterfamilias Tisdell was elected to the legislature while he was holding the office of county treasurer, and subsequent development made it plain that his penchant for holding office was not a paying business—that is not very true. He ran for the office of treasurer again but was defeated by David R. Holt, and when father Tisdell came to settle his accounts and turn the office over to his successor he found himself short on the cash balance, and had to sell his house in this city—which I think he wanted to do anyhow—to fix up the deficit. All this was done before he turned the office over, but the old man was always puzzled to know how his balance sheet was so far out of plumb.

It would have occurred to a careful business man that it was bad form to run that kind of office by proxy, or at least it would appear so to me, whatever may have been his notion on the subject. The temptation to be a legislator was too much for the old man, and a winter at Omaha in the honorable office of lawyer overcame his sense of business prudence, though I think he was persuaded or partially so, that the missing cash from the official till had been spent to defray the expenses of his several campaigns for the two offices he held at the time. Anyhow it was the last of his official life. Sometime afterwards his wife died, and notwithstanding his advanced age, he married his hired girl and then ensued a family disturbance that lasted the balance of his life. Some of the family lingered about Salem for a few years afterwards, but gradually one by one have left, or died, and at this time none are left in this country to my knowledge. In the course of my life I have known many families to go to pieces in much the same way.

Among others to locate on the upper Muddy was the Van Deventer family. I have seen this name spelled as one word—Vandeventer,—and I have seen it spelled as I give it here, but which of the two modes is the correct one I do not know. Proper names are arbitrary in all cases. In the spring of 1859 Morgan H. Van Deventer came to Nebraska and selected a location in the neighborhood of the present town of Stella, probably on the farm that he now owns, but of this my information is not accurate. The next year his father and I believe his whole family came out from Indiana, together with others and settled in the same vicinity. Uncle Chris, as the elder Van Deventer was known, belonged to that pioneer stock from over the Alleghenys, in the early days of the republic, of whom Theodore Roosevelt, late president of the United States, tells in his admirable work called "The Winning of the West." The impulse that sent his ancestors into the trackless

forests of Ohio and Indians to brave the dangers of the frontier and its savage denizens, induced him, even after passing the meridian of life, to push further west, where the untamed domain of Uncle Sam was to be had for the taking, and a mere nominal entrance fee. I remember the name he gave to the country where he fixed his residence—"Johnny Calk's Ridge"—and the satisfaction with which he pronounced it on his numerous visits to Falls City. Besides Morgan, whom I think was the oldest, he had two other sons that I knew very intimately, and I believe one other with whom I had but a slight acquaintance, and one daughter, as I now remember. Two of those were Federal soldiers in the war of the rebellion and one was slain in the line of his duty. The other, George served from the time he entered the service till the close of the war.

I met George to know him early in 1861. He was then quite young but he had that about him that quickly drew the attention of the people and at the fall election of that year he was elected county clerk, at that time the most important office in the county, defeating W. H. Mann, who up to that time was by far the most popular man in Richardson county. Young Van Deventer discharged the duties of his office so satisfactorily that at the next election, two years afterwards, he was re-elected without opposition. But the war was raging; his brother had been killed in an engagement with the enemy, and notwithstanding he was frail of body and somewhat a cripple as well, he could no longer brook the inactivity of official life, and resigned to take a captaincy in a Missouri regiment of Union soldiers, and went to the front to fight the enemies of his country. It was an ordeal and a sacrifice that few men would have made, and fewer still can thoroughly appreciate. Years afterwards, and when the grass was growing on the graves of the dead in the holy cause, he told me that the hardships he was compelled to endure in the campaigns of that rigorous service were more than his physical powers were able to bear, and that he had every reason to believe that their after effects would tend to shorten his days. Subsequent events have conspired to give credence to that foreboding of his, as he died when he should have been in the very prime of his young manhood.

I have known but few men who possessed the elements necessary to genuine popularity in a greater degree than he, and scarcely any who could get closer to the common run of people and command their attention. This came about measurably from his great sympathy for those in distress, from no matter what cause and in ever such case he was ready to lend a helping hand, and did it so naturally and cordially that no sense of obligation was suggested in the act to the recipient of his bounty. It is related of Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren, that they could deny a man a favor and at the same time make a friend of him; while it is said of John Quincy Adams that he never did a favor for a man without making him an enemy.

There are such people in all the walks of life, and it would be next to impossible to account for this strange phenomenon on any known principle of psychology, but that the fact exists, all who have served an apprenticeship to the business of life, and have observed the conduct of men with an interested attention, can truly affirm.

After his retirement from the army he was admitted to the bar at Brownville, and subsequently engaged in the active practice of the law in this city, and was rapidly forging to the front as a successful practitioner when the summons to quit the world came to him. The monition of the pale messenger is final, pre-emptory, and his beckon means come, and come now. I liked George Van Deventer, and I revere his memory for he was a man true as the loadstar under any and all circumstances,—the kind that God makes, in contradistinction to the brand that bears the vaneer of the social conventions.

Of the only remaining member of the family of Uncle Chris, his son, M. H. Van Deventer of Stella, it is only necessary to say that he has always been one of the solid men of the country he helped to build, whose laws he helped to make, and whose welfare he has steadily sought to promote through the circling seasons of fifty years. He is with us yet, hale and at his post-of duty.

It was not long till settlements commenced on the highlands, though at first they were thought to be of little value, principally, I think, because they were bare of timber. This notion was soon gotten out of the heads of the people, and when the fertile character of those lands became fully demonstrated, their occupation followed swift and sure, and by 1865 the country outside the valleys was dotted all over here and there with farms either partially or wholly prepared for cultivation.

John and Hiram King settled in the district of country lying between the present towns of Stella and a present town called Hillsdale, now long abandoned, but I am not able to give the exact date they came here. Mr. Jno. King is still living, hale, rugged and honest as of yore, and is a resident of the neighborhood where he first located, but I think his brother Hiram is dead. There were many others whom I used to know who took claims outside the Half-Breed track, in the neighborhood of Aspinwall, another defunct town just below the mouth of the little Nemaha, and some who lived in the town, and one especially,—Milt Pauline.

Down below that; was the old town of St. Deroin. The name, Deroin, is Indian-French, but why called saint, I do not know. If there are any in the saintly calendar of

that name the fact was never known to me, though that could well be and me not know it, but in all the reading I have done, and I have done considerable of it, that particular saint's name has never appeared in any book of ancient or modern lore that has come under my observation. I think probably the prefix saint to the name Deroin was the work of some inventive genius of the irreverent species. The candidate for canonization must be dead the full space of four hundred years before his name can be raised to the exalted dignity of a saint on earth.

I hardly believe any Deroin lived that long ago, and if any did, and he was at all like the race that lived in the vicinity of the old town on the Missouri in the early history of Nebraska, all I have to say is, that I am very certain the church would not have made a saint out of that kind of material.

## THE COMERS AND GOERS

### HAPPENINGS OF INTEREST TO YOU AND ME.

#### What Your Friends and Their Friends Have Been Doing the Past Week.

—Eat Sowler's Candy.  
—Dr. Wilson, Wahl's building.  
J. E. Leyda had business at Auburn Monday.  
Benj. Kelly of Salem was on our streets Tuesday.  
Vernie Roe and John Schuman were in Salem Sunday.  
Dame rumor has it that Falls City has a "peeping Tom."  
Alex. Tiehen of Dawson transacted business in this city Monday.  
Chris Shelly and family of Preston were on our streets Monday.  
Miss Helen Brebeck visited at Hiawatha the first of the week.  
Harmon Leonig of Humboldt met with the county board this week.  
James Sinclair and wife were up from Preston Monday afternoon.  
Dr. Ed Hayes of Dawson spent a day or so in this city the past week.  
Daniel Riley of Dawson was transacting business in Falls City Monday.  
—FOR SALE—My farm home adjoining Falls City. George A. Abbott Sherman Kirk was among the Dawson people on our streets Monday.  
Clyde Hill of Shubert has accepted a position on the Journal in this city.  
Ralph Jenne, Harry Craig and Walter Tanner were Atchison visitors Sunday.  
Mrs. W. C. Sloan and little son of Verdon were visitors at this place Tuesday.  
George Wahl and family entertained Thomas Naylor of Kansas City this week.  
Miss Maud Nation and Mable Hermes returned Monday from a visit at Auburn.  
David Moore of Leavenworth visited at the home of Alex. Branum part of this week.  
Mrs. Jake Gible of Verdon spent Sunday with her mother, Mrs. Sol Stump in this city.  
Charlie Marion and family entertained Agnes and Thomas Frazier of Hiawatha this week.  
Charlie Cornell and wife and Clarence Heck and wife were Atchison visitors Sunday afternoon.  
A. B. Everett sold his nice residence in the east part of town this week. Consideration \$2,500.  
—FOR SALE: Ten good milk cows mostly fresh. Inquire of Chas. Pribbeno, Preston, Nebr. 5-3

Joseph Graves of Humboldt spent Tuesday in this city. He was a pleasant caller at this office.  
Mrs. John Vogel went to Effingham Kas., Tuesday, to visit with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Murt Sullivan.  
Mrs. Susan Gales and Mrs. Alice Titlow were up from Rulo Sunday and visited at home of Benj. Potest.  
Carl Mason, after attending school at Springfield, Ill., the past year, is now home visiting his mother in this city.  
John Wiltse and family went down near Rulo, where they visited with his brother, James, and family, Sunday.  
Mrs. Delos Graham returned to her home in Dawson Tuesday after spending a few days with relatives at this place.  
Mrs. Clement Leger of Lincoln arrived in Falls City Monday for a visit with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Jones.

Our time honored friend O. C. Ayers of Nims City won the automobile race at Dawson on the Third at the celebration.

Frank Neitzel arrived in the city from Columbus Monday evening, being called here by the death of his father, August Neitzel.  
Will Rieger left Tuesday for the Pacific coast, where he will spend several weeks. He will visit the exposition at Seattle before returning home.  
Albert Spear and wife, who have been visiting with the latter's sister, Mrs. John Martin and husband at Lincoln, returned home Sunday.

Sheriff Fenton was subpoenaed before the Federal court at Lincoln Monday, the case being that of William Scott, who is supposed to be one of the Maybray gang.  
If the person who found a macintosh in the north part of town Friday morning will leave the same at Maust Bros.' office he will confer a favor upon the preacher who lost it.  
Arthur Conover and wife and two children returned to their home at Caldwell, Idaho, after visiting with Mrs. Conover's sister, Mrs. Thos. McMannas, in this city. They also visited relatives at Verdon.

Many people with chronic throat and lung trouble have found comfort and relief in Foley's Honey and Tar as it cures stubborn coughs after other treatment has failed. L. M. Ruggles, Reasnor, Iowa, writes: "The doctors said I had consumption, and I got no better until I took Foley's Honey and Tar. It stopped the hemorrhages and pain in my lungs and they are now as sound as a bullet."

Tuesday Mrs. Jane Sinclair, accompanied by her two daughters, Mrs. G. W. Livengood and Mrs. John Hossack, left for the former's home in Kildersville, Kansas. The Sinclair family will have a family reunion at that place in a few days. This will be the first time in thirty-two years that the family have all been home at once. James Sinclair of Preston will leave for that place in a few days.

The ladies of the Christian church will give a social at the auditorium Thursday evening, July 22. All the ladies who have carried a dollar for the church with their penny they received some time ago will be there and tell in rhyme how they earned it. Ice cream and home-made cake will be served, price 10 cents. All come and enjoy a social evening.

Frank Norris was in the city Saturday to see his children, who are at the home of his sister, Mrs. J. C. Maust. He reports his little daughter who is in the hospital at Omaha to be getting along nicely. The operation that was performed on her a short time ago has proven to be entirely successful.

Herbert Hedges and family this week entertained the former's mother, Mrs. Charles Hedges of Indianola, Neb., and Mrs. Wagoner and daughter of Columbus, O. They spent a few days here and then went to Kansas City to visit with Ralph Hedges and family.

Miss Jerometta Kelley returned to her home in this city Monday after spending a few days in Auburn, the guest of Miss Louise Hilger. She was accompanied home by Miss Hilger, who spent a few days at the home of Rev. H. Bex.

Ed. C. Allor, a farmer in Washington county, Kansas, and C. M. Allor a traveling salesman from Kansas, were in Falls City Monday evening enroute to Auburn, where they attended the funeral of P. D. Allor of that city.

Claud Roe, who has been enjoying a week's vacation from the post office has returned to his duties, and is once more the accommodating general delivery clerk, with a much improved disposition since his rest.

Mrs. Samuel Prater and daughter, Mrs. G. V. Stumbo and daughter, Jennie Pearl, returned from St. Joe the first of the week, where they had been visiting with Mrs. C. E. Peabody and husband.

George Wahl, Herald Gagnon, Tom Murphy, Louie Worth, Wm. Higgins, and Carl Butman were among those who attended the Knights of Columbus at Atchison Sunday.

Misses Merl and Margaret Naylor returned from Lexington this week where they have been spending some time with a sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Huett and family.

Mrs. Katherine Reiger left the first of the week for Colorado Springs, and will spend her vacation with her aunt, Mrs. Will Walker at that place.

W. A. Hossack left Sunday for Paxton, Nebraska, after spending a few days in this city with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Hossack.

Miss Lucy Sheehan spent this week, her vacation from Wahl's store, at Atchison, where she visited her sister, Miss Etta, and other relatives.

R. P. Thomas left Monday for the western part of the state, where he will look after business for the Gilligan Bridge Co.

Miss Vera Brannum returned Monday from Grand Island, Neb., where she had been spending some time with relatives.

Mrs. G. W. Livengood of Wymore came to Falls City Monday to visit for a short time with her sister, Mrs. John Hossack.

Miss Mame Hutchings left Wednesday for a visit to her sister, Mrs. Warren Jones and family at Superior Neb.

J. L. Slocum and family entertained W. B. Schmucker and wife of Miami, I. T., at their home this week.

WANTED TO BUY—Vacant lots or houses and lots in southeast part of town.—P. E. Farrington. 28-3

Mrs. Carrie Schable left for Oxford, Neb., Thursday to attend to some business matters.

Lawrence Paxton returned Friday from a two week's visit with friends at Auburn.

Mrs. R. P. Thomas, who has been quite ill, is now much better at this writing.

Joseph Miles has gone to California to spend the summer with his family.

County Clerk Hutchings with his bride, arrived in Falls City Monday.

Miss Stella Schock is visiting at Lexington, Nebraska.

A. Phillippi is a new clerk at Wahl's store.

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And commence the saving habit now

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Couer d'Alene Reservation: Register at Couer d'Alene, Idaho. (Buy tickets to Spokane.)

Spokane Reservation: Register at Spokane, Washington.

Registration dates July 15th to August 5th, inclusive. This is another of the remaining few chances for this generation to obtain good government lands. Call on nearest ticket agent for descriptive leaflet, showing conditions, excursion rates, train service etc.

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